HARAMBEE FLAME

a publication of the harambee afrikan cultural organization

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"CHRIST" MAS

This issue of the FLAME is devoted to enouraging serious thought among African people in this country(particularly in the Omaha-Lincoln area) about "Christ"-mas, why we celebrate this holiday, and whether we should continue to do so.

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We have been celebrating Christmas under the belief that Jesus was God and that he was born on December 25th. As to the question of the divinity of Jesus, we need only refer to the Bible, the very book that so many of us view as being the word of God. Jesus never made claim to being the "Son of God." Rather, he is quoted in the Bible as saying: "Whom do men say that I, the son of man, am?"(Matthew 16:13)

While many refer to the "miracles" performed by Jesus as evidence of his divinity, it must be considered that much of what would have been viewed as "miracles" in the time of Jesus would be understood now as natural phenomena. It is a matter of the difference in the level of scientific knowledge between that earlier time and the present. To cite two examples: "death" and "possession." We are now aware that there is a condition called "catalepsy" in which consciousness and feeling are suddenly and temporarily lost, and the muscles become rigid. "Possession by the devil" was seen as a relatively common occurrence until we discovered that there was such a condition as epilepsy.

Did Jesus work miracles or was he, as there have been many others, simply a healer? There are several sources which

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This issue of the FLAME is also devoted to encouraging serious thought among us about why we should celebrate Kwanzaa, both as an alternative to the very commercialized "Christ"-mas and as a meaningful affirmation of our Africanness.

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Kwanzaa was developed by Maulana Karenga sixteen years ago as an alternative to a very commercialized Christmas. The word, "Kwanzaa," comes from the Swahili word, "Kwanza," which means "first fruits." The additional "a" was added at the end in order to distinguish Kwanzaa as a period of celebration by African people in the U.S. from Kwanza as a word for "first fruits." Kwanzaa is patterned after the festivals conducted by African tribes following and in celebration of the harvests.

Because Kwanzaa is essentially an African idea and is rooted in traditional African principles, as opposed to the Western-orientation of Christmas, this celebration provides a link between African people in this country and our traditional African cultural and social heritage. Promotion of Kwanzaa, primarily through the efforts of the non-profit Kwanzaa Foundation in Los Angeles, has moved this holiday from rather obscure beginnings to widespread observance across the U.S.

From the December '83 issue of EBONY: "It(Kwanzaa) is held December 26 through January 1 with principles and formalities for each of the seven days. A candle-lighting ceremony each day initiates a devotion for one of the seven principles: Unity(Umoja), Self-determination(Kujicha-

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indicate that Jesus was initiated into the Egyptian Mystery System(See Dr. Yosef Ben-Jochannan's BLACK MAN'S RELIGION.). So initiated, Jesus would have been trained in the secrets of healing and "magic."

In regards the question as to the date of Jesus' birth, there is a great deal of evidence which shows that it is very improbable that Jesus was born on December 25th. When Jesus was born, "there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night"(Luke 2:8). In THE PLAIN TRUTH ABOUT CHRISTMAS by Herbert W. Armstrong, it is stated that, in Judaea, the shepherds always brought their flocks from the mountainsides and fields and corralled them not later than October 15 in order to protect them from the cold, rainy season which followed that date. By way of confirmation, chapter 2, verse 11 of the Song of Solomon is cited here: "For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone."

If December 25th. was not the birthday of Jesus, how did it come to be celebrated as such? The 1911 edition of the CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA states that Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the Church and that the origin of this festival appears to be Egypt. The ENCYCLOPEDIA AMERICANA tells us that the Roman Catholic Church authorized the celebration of December 25th. as the birthday of Jesus in the fifth century A.D. According to this source, December 25th. was chosen because it was already being celebrated as the birthday of the mythical Roman god of the sun, Sol, and that this was a convenient date in that the actual date of the birth of Jesus was not known at that time.

Along with the issue of the celebration of Christmas, there is the matter of how we celebrate. What has the Bible to say about trimming the Christmas tree, for example? From chapter 10 of Jeremiah we get the following: "...Learn not the way

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gulia), Collective Work and Responsibility(Ujima), Cooperative Economics (Ujaama), Purpose(Nia), Creativity (Kuumba), and Faith(Imani). On the last day a feast(Karamu) is given."

Though there is gift-giving connected with Kwanzaa, the emphasis is not on gifts but on "fruits." Kwanzaa is based upon the realization and recognition that little is possible unless people work together to achieve it, that the fruits of labor/harvest of that which has been planted and cultivated come from cooperation. It is cooperation, or communalism, which is the foundation of traditional African tribal societies.

Kwanzaa gives us the opportunity to get our children off the laps of department store Santa Clauses and into the lap of community-as-family. It provides us with circumstances designed for community affirmation of collective self-appreciation and inspiration. Living in America, midst the cut-throat materialism which is so much a part of it, leaves us feeling isolated, as if each of us were an island unto him or herself. The idea that "I'm going to get mine" places us all in jeapardy of each other as we jockey for position on the backs of each other.

We are in urgent need of institutions which enable us to feel a part of something meaningful, something of permanence. One of the pricnciples of Kwanzaa is "Imani"(faith), which focuses, not only on faith in the High Spirit, but on faith in ourselves as a people. To have faith in one's community is to be able to function in a hostile society without hopelessness, without a sense of desperation. It is to know that you are not alone. We have need for the fostering of such a sense of connection to each other. Kwanzaa is but one step in preparing ourselves spiritually for the dawning of a time of faith in our collective self.

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of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them.

"For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe.

"They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not."

While there is a great deal of evidence to indicate both that Jesus was not born on the 25th. of December and that the origins of this celebration had no connection to Jesus at all, there is at least one other factor which places our recognition of this holiday under a negative light. By celebrating "Christ"-mas we pay homage to what appears to be a very destructive(for us) distortion of historical facts related to the ethnicity of Jesus. That Jesus is portrayed in the Western world as a Caucasian stands in contradiction to overwhelming evidence that this great man was either African or African-Asian.

Chapter one, verse seventeen of the Book of Matthew tells us that Jesus was descended from Abraham. Abraham, according to Dr. Jochannan's BLACK MAN'S RELIGION, was born in Ur, Chaldea, located in what we now know as "Iraq." Iraq lies to the south of the ancient land of Colchis(Georgian republic of the U.S.S.R.) and is separated from it by the modern nations, Turkey and Iran.

The Greek historian, Herodotus, who was born between 480 and 490 years before the birth of Jesus, describes the people of Colchis in his HISTORY OF THE GREEK AND PERSIAN WAR: "There can be no doubt that the Colchians are an Egyptian race...My own conjectures were founded,first, on the fact that they are black-skinned and have wooly hair, which certainly amounts to but little, since several other nations are so too; but further and more especially, on the circumstance that the Colchians, the Egyp-

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The Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization will be celebrating Kwanzaa again this year. The details of the program have not been finalized as of yet but we will be having the celebration on the 27th. of December in the evening. If you are interested in participating, either write us or contact our sponsor, Curtis Shields, at 471-3161.

CHANGES

The Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization meetings will take place on Tuesdays now. The times for the meetings remains the same as previously.

Due to a manpower realignment, resulting from a change in prison management procedures, Scott Marshall is no longer our sponsor. He has been replaced by Curtis Shields. Scott functioned as our sponsor well and gave us a great deal of cooperation and assistance. We take this time to express our appreciation for the work he did on our behalf. It is hoped that our new sponsor, Curtis Shields, will be of as much an aid to us as was his predecessor.

ANNOUNCEMENT

In the previous issue of the FLAME we ran an announcement about a writing contest being sponsored by AIM QUARTERLY. At the time that we ran that announcement our editor, suffering the ill-effects of chewing chicken wire and slapping himself across the face with plywood, couldn't find the information he needed.

ESSAY CONTEST

"Is America Ready For A Black President"
Send manuscripts to AIM QUARTERLY
P.O. Box 20554
Chicago, Ill.
60619

1st. Prize $200
2nd. Prize $150
3rd. Prize $100

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tians and the Ethiopians are the only nations who have practiced circumcision from the earliest times."

Herodotus' description of the Colchians as being of African origin is important in that the land of Colchis is located well north of what has been cited as the birthplace of Abraham, Ur, Chaldea. It is inconceivable that, inasmuch as Colchis was farther north from Africa than was Chaldea, Abraham would have been anything other than a person with black skin and wooly hair. To suggest otherwise would require a very bizarre imagination, one that would, without providing an explanation as to how it might have come to be, conjure up a land(Chaldea) of white people isolated geographically from any other white folks.

The portrayals of Jesus as a Caucasian, then, make no sense inasmuch as he was descended from Abraham. There is a great deal more evidence pointing to the African or African-Asian identity of Jesus but one more item should be adequate for this treatment of the issue. From Revelation(1:13-15): "And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps(breast) with a golden girdle(sash or belt). His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace:..."

In celebrating "Christ"-mas, we are celebrating the apparently erroneous birth date of a Jesus whose true identity was covered over by the European Church, such that a Jesus of black skin and wooly hair became a white God-man of European fantasy.

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The HARAMBEE FLAME is a publication of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization, editor/David L. Rice. Your comments are welcome.

FROM OTHER SOURCES

The following is an excerpt from Louis Farranhan's address at the August 27th. March on Washington. The entire address appears in the Nov./Dec. '83 edition of THE BLACK COLLEGIAN.

"I am here today to declare to the world that wealth does not stand for greatness. Neither does power and technology stand for greatness. A nation's greatness is measured by its ability to give justice to the poor, the oppressed, the weak, the disadvantaged.

"We stand here today between two monuments, the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Monument. And as we stand here between these monuments, I am reminded of the words of George Washington, the first president of these United States, who said, 'I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just.' And at my back, Abraham Lincoln, who said, 'America cannot exist half slave and half free.' And in between these two monuments huddle the masses of Black America, the masses of the people yearning still to breathe free.

"Dr. King wanted America to rise up and live out her creed, that creed that says all people are created equally. In order for America to rise up and live out that creed the United States Government must overcome this propensity toward racism which pervades every institution in America. The government of America must overcome this desire to move into foreign countries and dictate who will be their leader and what kind of government those people shall have. In order for America to rise up and live out its creed, this government must stop the wanton murder of Black men, women and children in the ghettos of America by brutal police force. This government must say that they will overcome this desire to tell others how to live abroad while neglecting Americans at home."

POETRY

A CHRISTMAS POEM

our children sit
on the laps of rosy-cheeked
white-faced
department store santa clauses clad
in bright fuzzy suits and false beards
beaming wage-earned smiles
asking
what do you want for christmas
little darky
while we stand before this scene feeling awkward
ill-at-ease
as our little ones mouth their long lists
of things the salesmen of television
have driven home to them
with the hard sell
the soft sell
as brothers
sisters
cousins
and others we know
languish in cells
for wanting things so bad but could not buy
we stand awkward
feel inadequate and ashamed
over wishes
the contents of our pockets cannot fulfill
we smile nervous as the children return to us
ho-hoed half to death
by the alcoholic breath
of holiday spirits.

--David L. Rice